

LIPODYSTROPHY RESULTING FROM INSULIN INJECTIONS: TREATMENT BY COCONUT OIL INJECTIONS

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REPEATED insulin injections in a localized area often result in a reduction in subcutaneous fat in that region. The type of insulin used does not seem to make any difference.

Mrs. S.Z., aged 50, with moderately severe and refractory diabetes, had been under treatment with diet and insulin for the previous 30 years. In 1954, she came to my office complaining of the "ugly appearance" of her thighs. She was advised to change the site of insulin injection. In 1957, she returned with the same complaints. The thighs had not appreciably changed.

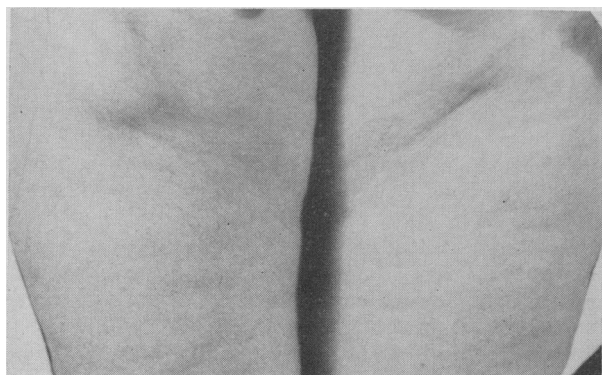


Fig. 1a.—Photograph taken on October 31, 1957.

There were deep depressions of the skin in the middle third of both thighs, extending downwards and inwards as furrows about six inches long. The depth of the indentations was between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. The affected skin was thin, relatively hard, wrinkled and darker than the surrounding normal skin. The patient did not complain of physical discomfort as a result of the local fat atrophy.

Treatment consisted of injections of coconut oil under the atrophic skin. Coconut oil was chosen because it is semisolid at warm room temperature, is a safe edible fat, and boils and cools easily. After boiling, the liquid is allowed to cool to skin temperature or slightly above; this can be ascertained by testing with the hand the temperature of the syringe filled with the coconut oil. The range of safe temperature difference is quite wide, and the margin of safety is considerable.

An injection of the liquified coconut oil under the atrophic skin is carried out in the usual manner. The amount of oil injected will depend on the degree of the depression. In general, enough oil is injected in the various depressed areas to make them level with the adjacent skin. A 20-gauge needle is quite satisfactory. After withdrawal of the needle, a collodion dressing is applied over the puncture made by the needle and allowed to remain for a day.

The patient did not complain of discomfort immediately after the injection. However, within a day or two, a local reaction, manifesting itself as a slight discomfort and by redness and heat, ensued, but it did

not require treatment and subsided completely within a week.

Six weeks after the initial injection there was a slight regression (Fig. 1a). Another injection was then given under the partly depressed areas. The patient was advised not to use the thighs for her insulin injections. Fig. 1b, taken about two and a half years after the second injection, shows that there has been a diminution in the defect, apparent after two and a half years without treatment.

On May 2, 1960, the treated skin was thicker, softer and smoother than before treatment.

Two patients with the same condition, but of a milder nature than in the case described, were treated by two injections at monthly intervals. It is now over two years since the last injections were given and the improvement in these cases is quite obvious.

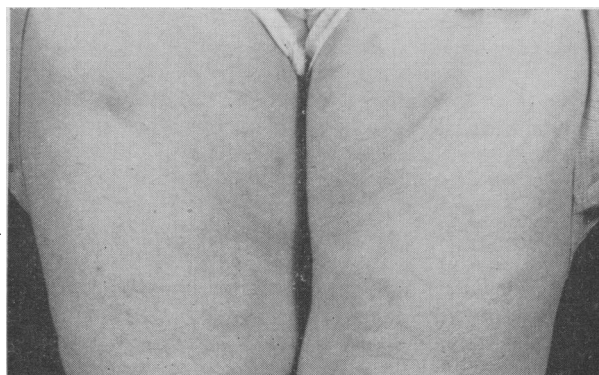


Fig. 1b.—Photograph taken on May 2, 1960.

Unfortunately, no photographic record is available of the defect before treatment was initiated.

SUMMARY

Sterilized coconut oil was injected under the skin where a marked atrophy in fat had resulted from repeated injection of insulin. Two and a half years after the last treatment, an appreciable amelioration in the defect is observed.

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THE PATIENT'S VIEWPOINT

Three cheers and a triple boom of the bass drum to the doctor who wrote recently in a medical journal that doctors should be more considerate of their patients' time. The doctor who wrote the piece feels that his colleagues are downright rude sometimes. "Often," says he "their time is just as important, and schedule as pressing as the doctor's."

How many doctors have patients wait an hour past the precise time they were booked for an appointment? Plenty! The same holds true for dentists. As for us, our sawbones has never been on time but we have never minded. It's good for the soul to sit and watch others with bigger problems and more ills. The wait is rewarding in the realization that life after all is pretty nice.—*Windsor (Ontario) Star*.